

March 2013

Raised Bill No. 1065 LCO No. 4107

My name is Michelene Longo. I have been a practicing Substance Abuse Counselor for the almost twenty years and can attest to the unique and specialized skills need to work in this field and with the varied population that we as licensed professionals see every day. It takes specified training and education in conjunction with on-going clinical supervision from other Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors (LADCs), on-going training in the field and a good amount of experience.

Contrary to popular beliefs and stereotypes, signs of substance abuse and dependence are not always apparent or what one might believe they should be. Unlike what we see on television and in the movies, many of those with substance abuse issues are functioning reasonably well from outside appearances, paying bills, raising families and holding down jobs. They frequently are seen by medical or other helping professionals for what seems to be issues unrelated to substance use or abuse. Without specialized training and education, most of these other professional miss the subtle signs of abuse and addiction and will be treated for the consequences of their substance use rather than the core problem of substance abuse or addiction.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to compare LADCs and others in the human services field to those in the medical field. For example, assuming that a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) has the same skills, training and knowledge to accurately recognize, diagnose and treat substance abuse disorders would be like saying my dermatologist is just as capable as my cardiologist to treat my heart condition just by virtue of being in the medical field. I know when it comes to my medical health, I want to rely on those with specialized and specific education and training. The same should hold true for substance abuse issues.

I would like to thank you for your time and I hope you can support efforts to strengthen the standards for licensed addiction professionals in CT.

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